THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

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551 O_2 GENERATION PLANTS TO BE SET UP IN GHs ACROSS INDIA

The dedicated pressure swing adsorption (PSA) plants aim to arrest the acute shortage of oxygen gas across the country

EXECUTION COST BORNE BY PM-CARES FUND

The plants, funded by PM-CARES, will soon come up at identified hospitals in district headquarters to ensure they have a captive oxygen generation facility. Along with the 'top-up' liquid medical oxygen, these facilities seek to ensure that government hospitals do not face sudden disruption in supplies and have adequate stock to manage Covid patients

162 SANCTIONED EARLIER, 33 OPERATIONAL

- Earlier, the Centre had claimed that 33 of the 162 approved PSA plants were functional. But ground reports suggested even that many were not operational. The 551 are in addition to the 162
- Hospitals appear more comfortable at present with the oxygen refill system that is already in place instead of pushing for PSAs

150 tonnes

LIQUID OXYGEN CARRIED SO FAR BY THE RAILWAYS' OXYGEN EXPRESS

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POSITIVE IN BENGAL

A patient who tested positive for Covid-19 being taken to a critical care unit at the M R Bangur Hospital in Kolkata on Sunday | ARUNAVASEN

US finally agrees to export raw materials

Stung by the barrage of criticism it drew for refusing to lift export embargoes on raw materials to manufacture vaccines in India, the White House late on Sunday night decided to ease the curbs so as to help produce Covishield. The decision to ease the bottleneck came after the US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan spoke to his Indian counterpart Ajit Doval on the phone | P7

NATIONWIDE

	APRIL 24	APRIL 25
Fresh cases	3,46,786	3,49,691
Recoveries	2,19,838	2,17,113
Deaths	2,624	2,767

OUR IPL SPACE

Starting today, *TNIE* will gainfully utilise the space freed up by suspending IPL coverage. To begin with, we have a picture collage capturing grim Covid reality across the country

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Bengaluru City Police personnel check a motorist during the weekend lockdown, imposed as a measure to contain the spread of Covid-19, in Bengaluru on Sunday | ASHISHKRISHNA HP

Explosive rise places B'luru at top of active Covid heap

City records 151 pc spike in patient volume since April 15; Experts call for tough steps

NIRAD MUDUR & BOSKY KHANNA @ Bengaluru

KARNATAKA's capital Bengaluru has emerged as the city with the highest active Covid-19 case load in the country with 1,80,542 patients currently under treatment in hospitals and in home isolation.

Experts are rattled by the scary explosion of cases in Bengaluru, on which they are basing their desperate appeal for much stricter measures — even a complete lockdown — to stem the massive infection spread.

Bengaluru has recorded a whopping 151.35 per cent increase in the volume of patients currently under treatment since April 15, when the figure was 71,827. With this huge jump, Bengaluru, with a dubious distinction, is far ahead of Delhi (93,080 active case load) and more than double that of Mumbai (75,498), which are ranked second and third, respectively.

Bengaluru's active case load has increased dramatically over the past few days and the number, at present, is 27.62 per cent of the total number of people who tested positive in the city since March 2020. On Sunday, the city added 20,733 new cases, taking the total to 6,53,656.

It is this explosive rise in numbers that has thrown the city's health system out of gear, leading to oxygen shortages and non-availability of beds, even for critically sick Covid-19 patients across Bengaluru.

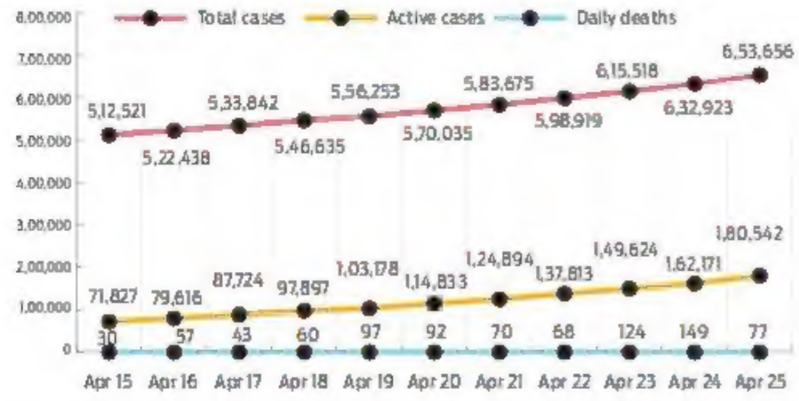
Professor at Indian Institute of Public Health Dr Giridhara R Babu, a senior epidemiologist and member of the state government's Technical Advisory Committee, told *The New Indian Express*, "There is a need to impose a lockdown, and the time should be utilised by the government to increase facilities like oxygen beds in all hospitals, medical colleges, nursing institutes, Covid Care Centres, hostels, ayurvedic and homeopathic hospitals and colleges. In the first phase, more efforts were made than what is being done now. In the second wave, the intensity and efforts need to be scaled up by five times to handle the situation."

Looking at the way the numbers are spiking, he foresees the second wave peaking in mid-May. P5

CITY LIKELY UNDER FULL LOCKDOWN TILL MAY 5

A complete lockdown in Bengaluru is likely from April 26 evening to May 5 morning, according to sources in the government. Thereafter, an extension till May 20 is also being considered, if necessary. A final decision will be taken by the CM after consultations with the Centre on Monday after the cabinet meeting, the sources said.

WORRYING STATS Bengaluru Urban has logged a whopping 151.35% jump in active cases in the last 11 days, making it a major Covid hotspot



Delhi extends lockdown by a week, Mumbai breathes easy

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi/Mumbai

On a day the Delhi government opted for another week of lockdown to contain the spread amid an erratic oxygen supply that is crippling its healthcare system, Mumbai seemed to have turned the corner, with its municipal body on Sunday saying that a dip in numbers, fresh arrival of vaccine and adequate oxygen supply had bolstered its fight.

Announcing the fresh lockdown till May 3, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said the positivity rate had peaked to 37% during the ongoing shutdown, before dipping to under 30% on Sunday. "This is not to say that the disease is ebbing. It may increase or decrease in the coming days," he said. The city government, however, allowed courier services and some sections of self-employed people to ply their trade, provided they possess e-passes.

Stating that the oxygen situation in Delhi was still dire, he said: "Delhi's requirement is 700 MT and what's reaching us is 330-335 MT." He said he has written to the CMs of all states to divert their surplus to Delhi to bridge the shortfall.

Meanwhile, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation said it will resume inoculation at all its centres with the arrival of 1.5 lakh fresh Covishield doses. Its municipal commissioner said that the oxygen situation, too, was 'normal' as all supply issues had been resolved.

WITH THIS ISSUE

THE ESSENTIAL CAMPUS DIGEST edex

12 PAGES, INCLUDING 16 OF edex, 4 OF CITY EXPRESS

Give jabs to all for free, says Oppn as govt eyes options

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

WITH about 17 states, including Kerala, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar, announcing free vaccines for all its citizens aged above 18, the Opposition in Karnataka has urged the government to follow suit.

While the Karnataka Government has placed an order for one crore doses on Covishield vaccines at a cost of Rs 400 crore to vaccinate those above the age of 18 in the first phase, no decision has been taken on whether it will be administered free of cost or whether it will be subsidised for the citizens. A discussion on this issue is expected to be taken during the Cabinet meeting on Monday where Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa will also review the Covid-19 situation and the need for enforcing more restrictions.

Leaders of the Congress party, meanwhile, have demanded that vaccines be given free of cost to citizens of all ages. "India is probably the only country which is discussing vaccine prices, when it's being given for free across the world. Why has Karnataka govt still not announced FREE VACCINATION for all? I demand that free vaccines be given to all citizens & a roll-out plan be shared ASAP," asked Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee president D K Shivakumar. His demand for free vaccine resonated with netizens as well. P4

Hospitals, PHCs running out of vaccine stocks

BANSY KALAPPA & DIVYA CUTINHO @ Bengaluru, Mangaluru

AT a time when the Covid-19 is raging and the number of people seeking vaccines has gone up substantially, many hospitals, especially private entities, are running out of stocks of both vaccines across major cities. On Sunday, St Philomena's Hospital in Vivek Nagar and Axon Hospital in HAL Stage II, both in Bengaluru, had put up posters about non-availability of vaccines.

Many of those seeking to get vaccinated on Sunday, specially senior citizens who were scheduled to get their second dose, had to return from St Martha's Hospital, Abhaya Hasta Hospital and Brimecare Hospital as they were told that there was no vaccine available. "The same was the situation on Friday and Saturday," said Divaker P D, a resident of HSR Layout in South Bengaluru. "For the first dose, they could take appointments on the phone. But for the second dose, they need to just walk-in and wait. It can be a nightmare for senior citizens to drive from hospital to hospital looking for the vaccine and wait for hours thereafter," he rued. P4

STATEWIDE

	APRIL 24	APRIL 25
Fresh cases	29,438	34,804
Recoveries	9,058	6,982
Deaths	208	143

Govt hijacking vax, claim Cong-ruled states

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

ACCUSING the Centre of step-motherly treatment, states ruled by the Congress and its allies on Sunday said it is hijacking vaccines from manufacturers and doubted if they will be able to vaccinate people in the 18-45-year age group from May 1.

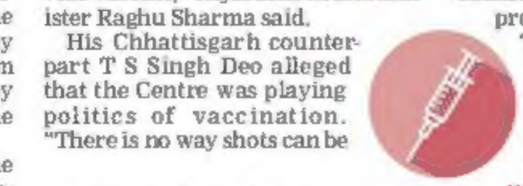
At a joint press conference, the health ministers of Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Punjab and Jharkhand said the Centre has already taken away a major portion of the stock and doses are not available to them.

"How do we vaccinate adults of 18-45 years as Serum Institute has said they will not be able to provide vaccine till May 15? We have the capacity, but not the vaccine. States should get the supplies. The Centre should provide vaccine," Rajasthan health minister Raghu Sharma said.

His Chhattisgarh counterpart T S Singh Deo alleged that the Centre was playing politics of vaccination. "There is no way shots can be administered if the vaccine is not available. How will we provide vaccination? We are ready to vaccinate, provided we have the vaccines. The country is being misguided. The Centre has made a joke of this," he charged.

Punjab Health Minister Balbir Singh Sidhu said, "If the Centre does not support us, how can we roll out the vaccination drive? We are only hand-to-mouth on vaccines," Sidhu said.

Jharkhand Health Minister Banna Gupta charged that "the government that talks of one Constitution, one tax, is now trying to derive benefit out of the pandemic through differential pricing of vaccines."



No reason for states to complain, says Vardhan

New Delhi: The Centre liberalised the vaccination strategy following requests from nearly all states to do so, Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan said on Sunday, adding there was no reason for them to complain now | P7

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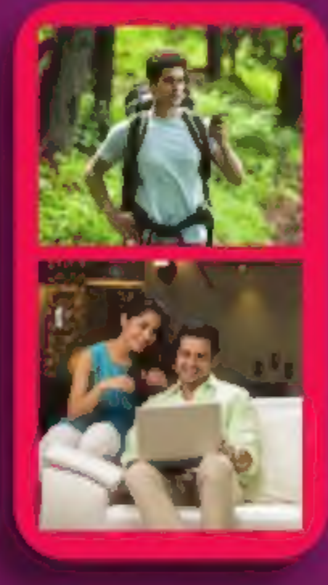

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